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Sixty-second year

Identical letters dated 10 December 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that represents the position of the Syrian Arab Republic on the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641) (see annex).

I would greatly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 17, and of the Security Council before the date of consideration of the report by the Security Council.

Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 10 December 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter stating the position of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

1. Syria affirms once again its condemnation of the aggression committed by Israel against Lebanon in July 2006, which resulted in the killing and wounding of thousands of innocent Lebanese and which the Security Council was not able to stop as of the first days owing to the well-known pressure exerted on it. As a result, the Israeli machine of destruction continued for 33 days in an unprecedented violation of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. Leaving aside the question of the conditions that led to the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1701 (2006), the Syrian Arab Republic affirms the need to implement that resolution without selectivity and without targeting the parties that basically suffered the disastrous consequences of that aggression. Syria would like to reiterate its appreciation of the role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in continuing to carry out its mission, especially with respect to the daily violations of resolution 1701 (2006) committed by Israel. Syria reaffirms its strong condemnation of the aggression committed by dubious elements against members of the Spanish battalion participating in UNIFIL and demands that the Security Council shoulder its responsibilities in an unbiased, impartial manner, calling Israel to account and sanctioning it for its near-daily violations of resolution 1701 (2006). Those violations are documented officially with the United Nations on the basis of reports of the UNIFIL Command and the numerous letters addressed by Lebanon to the United Nations from time to time, particularly in view of the fact that Israeli declarations do not deny the occurrence of those violations, but, rather, affirm them. The events are grounds for genuine astonishment when the Council stands by helplessly in the face of Israel's continued refusal to provide the United Nations and Lebanon with maps of mines and cluster bombs, which have so far killed some 233 Lebanese citizens, including many children, and taken a toll of dozens of victims among elements belonging to international groups.

2. The Syrian Arab Republic provided great support to the Lebanese Army in its confrontation with the terrorists of Fath al-Islam at Nahr al-Barid. In this connection, we should like to reiterate that Fath al-Islam is as much an enemy to Syria as it is to Lebanon. The Syrian Arab Republic should also like to recall the repeated statements made by Lebanese officials that the members of that organization belonged to Al-Qaida. The Commander of the Lebanese Army, on 13 August 2007, stated that Fath al-Islam was a branch of Al-Qaida and had no relationship to Syrian intelligence, while the Chief of Staff of the Lebanese armed forces, on 4 September 2007, said that the Commander of the Lebanese Army had

stated that the Fath al-Islam group at the Nahr al-Barid camp had no relationship with the Syrian Arab Republic or with Syrian intelligence and that he had no information indicating that there was a relationship between that organization and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Director of Military Intelligence of the Lebanese Army, on 4 September 2007, affirmed that the link between Fath al-Islam and Al-Qaida has been confirmed through the questioning of detainees and that Fath al-Islam had no relationship with Syrian intelligence. Both the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior of the Syrian Arab Republic had drawn the attention of the international community to that matter early on. That information had also been conveyed to the Secretary-General by the Syrian Arab Republic via note SG-089 of 26 March 2007. Furthermore, independent sources have confirmed that more than three fourths of the terrorists at Nahr al-Barid had entered Lebanon through Beirut airport.

3. The Syrian Arab Republic wishes to emphasize that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is regulated by Lebanese-Palestinian agreements, which have nothing to do with the Syrian Arab Republic, and that all Palestinian positions in Lebanon are on Lebanese territory exclusively. Consequently, the Syrian Arab Republic is not responsible for any defects, should any exist, in the agreements signed by the Palestinian and Lebanese sides.

4. The allegations about weapons smuggling across the Syrian-Lebanese border are motivated by political rather than security considerations, and are designed to provide cover for Israel's continuing violations of both Lebanese sovereignty and Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). We recall again in this context the statements made by the Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, and the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, in which they denied that the army leadership was conveying information to the Lebanese Government on the smuggling of arms to Palestinian factions across the Syrian-Lebanese borders. The report issued by the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team confirmed the accuracy of this position in its paragraphs 45 and 120. Syria has conveyed this position to the Secretary-General in a letter issued as Security Council document S/2007/431, and again in a letter dated 19 October 2007 from the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. The dubious allegations being deliberately spread by Israel about weapons smuggling across the Syrian-Lebanese border are intended to create pretexts for it not to comply with resolution 1701 (2006), and should be completely disregarded, given that Israel is hostile to Syria and is occupying part of its territory in violation of international law and dozens of resolutions issued by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and specialized agencies of the United Nations. We recall again in this regard our letter addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council concerning the violation by Israel of our airspace on 6 September 2007, which was issued as document A/61/1041-S/2007/537. Moreover, Israel's claim that it possesses evidence is, in itself, flagrant evidence that Israel is in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006), as the claim is an implicit admission that Israel is violating Lebanese airspace at the Syrian borders, which, in this case, enables it to photograph any vegetable or goods truck and tout the pictures as being of trucks carrying weapons. In fact, Israel bombed a Syrian vegetable truck during its attack on Lebanon in 2006, killing approximately 30 Syrian civilian workers who were working in Lebanon.

5. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that the issue of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon is a bilateral sovereign matter that should be undertaken by the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. Syria would also like to reaffirm to all Member States of the Security Council and of the United Nations its determination to establish such relations as soon as a Lebanese Government exists that is willing to establish friendly relations with Syria. This was affirmed in a letter dated 19 October 2007 from the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council.

6. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that the demarcation of borders is a bilateral sovereign matter that should be resolved between the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. In this regard, we wish to point out that we had expected that the Secretary-General would indicate in his report that the real reason why the resolution of the Shab'a farms problem has faltered is Israel's continued occupation of the Shab'a farms and the occupied Syrian Golan, and its refusal to comply with legitimate international resolutions.

7. The Syrian Arab Republic wishes to clarify once again that contacts between the Syrian and Lebanese sides regarding control of their common borders have not ceased. It notes that it provided the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, in its letter No. 444 of 2 November 2007, with an updated list of its 17 meetings to date, and will continue to inform the Secretariat and the Security Council of subsequent meetings. Our memorandum indicated that the objective of these bilateral meetings is border control and the prevention of smuggling. We have repeatedly indicated that the Syrian Arab Republic is ready to begin demarcating the Syrian-Lebanese border, starting from the north for practical reasons, namely, that the southern part of this common border is under Israeli occupation.

8. The Syrian Arab Republic re-emphasizes that it has doubled the number of border guards on the Syrian side. Syria notes that it has requested a number of European States to provide it with technical equipment to assist it with monitoring its borders and train Syrian personnel to perform this task. However, it has yet to receive a definitive response from those States, which have provided the Lebanese side with the equipment requested.

9. Finally, Syria calls on others to respect the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon and the rule of non-interference in its internal affairs, in theory and in practice, to preserve the peace and security of this brotherly neighbour country which has suffered considerably because of external intervention in its internal affairs.